

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
Medical Officer of Health

OF THE
ST. ALBANS
URBAN SANITARY DISTRICT,
FOR THE YEAR, 1906,

BY
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&c., &c.

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TO THE MAYOR AND CORPORATION OF THE
CITY OF ST. ALBAN.

GENTLEMEN—

I have the honour to present to you my Annual Report for the Year 1906.

The mean temperature of the year was 49.3°F, which is somewhat over the average, and higher than it has been for many years. The first quarter of the year was very mild, especially in the month of January, with a very heavy rainfall of 8.52 inches, more than half of which fell in January. The second quarter was also very warm, though there were several night frosts in the end of April and in May, which did a great deal of damage to the fruit blossoms. The rainfall, 4.6 inches, was slightly over the average, and more than half of the rain fell in June. The third quarter was exceedingly warm with an average temperature of 61.9°F, with an exceedingly small rainfall, only 3.37 inches. Indeed this quarter was characterised throughout by excessive heat and great dryness. The fourth quarter was on the whole very warm, although there was a cold period towards the end of December. The rainfall during this quarter, 12.21 inches, was very high, and there was an unusual amount of snow in the last week of the year, amounting altogether to quite 9 or 10 inches. The highest temperature recorded was 92.7°F, on August 31st, and September 2nd, and the lowest temperature was 18.8°F, on December 27th. The rainfall for the year was 28.7 inches, considerably over the average, in spite of the exceedingly dry Summer. The heaviest rainfall on any one day was 1.91 inches, on June 28th. July and August were much the warmest months, though June and September were also unusually warm, and the coldest month was February. The rainfall was about

the average in Spring, very deficient in Summer, and very much over the average in Autumn and Winter. The year 1906 was in every respect a most exceptional year, with a mild very rainy winter, and a very hot and very dry Summer.

During the year there were 224 deaths registered within the City of St. Alban, 116 of males and 108 of females. There were 41 deaths in the Abbey district, 74 in St. Peter's, 32 in St. Michael's, 8 in Sandridge, 17 in the Hospital, and 52 in the Union Workhouse.

Taking the population of the City, as estimated to the middle of 1906, to be 18,050, we find the total death rate to be 12.4. But to get the true death rate, we must take into account the fact that 12 of the 17 deaths which occurred in the Hospital, and 22 of the 52 deaths in the Workhouse, were of persons who did not belong to our City. There were also 2 persons belonging to St. Albans, who died in the Herts County Asylum, which have to be added to the number. Deducting these 34 cases and adding 2 we get 192 as the corrected number of deaths, and 10.6 as the true death rate.

This is a slight improvement on the previous year; for in 1905 the total number of deaths was 228, and the gross death rate 12.8; while the corrected number of deaths was 206, and the true death rate 11.5. In 1904 the total number of deaths was 247, and the gross death rate 13.6; the corrected number of deaths 224, and the true death rate 12.8. This improvement is all the more satisfactory when we consider that despite the exceedingly hot weather which we had last Summer, the infantile death rate has not materially increased. We are well under the average death rate for Rural England and Wales, which in 1905 was 14.9.

As three of the deaths registered in January 1906 actually occurred in December 1905, and two deaths registered in January 1907 occurred in December 1906, the number of deaths which really happened in St. Albans in the year 1906 was 223.

There were 19 deaths in January, 14 in February, 20 in March, 15 in April, 19 in May, 18 in June, 11 in July, 14 in August, 22 in September, 22 in October, 27 in November, and 23 in December. The greatest mortality was therefore in November, and July was the month with the smallest number of deaths.

Of the total deaths 28 were infants under 1 year of age, giving us an infantile death rate of 1.5. In 1905, the deaths amongst infants were 27, and the infantile death rate was 1.4. The number of deaths of children between 1 and 5 was 8, and between 5 and 15 it was 9. In 1905, these numbers were respectively 11 and 11. There were 9 deaths between 15 and 25,

and 66 from 25 to 65; while in 1905 the deaths for these ages were respectively 7 and 79. There were 104 deaths of persons of 65 years and upwards, against 71 in the previous year. There was therefore a slight increase in the number of deaths amongst infants, a decrease in the deaths amongst older children and middle-aged people, and a great increase in the mortality amongst persons over 65.

There were 6 deaths from Pneumonia, against 12 in 1905; 15 from Bronchitis and diseases of the Respiratory System against 20 in the previous year; 53 from diseases of the Heart against 48; and 25 from diseases of the Nervous System, against 29 in the year immediately preceding. There were 22 deaths from Phthisis and 7 from other Tubercular diseases, against 20 from Phthisis and 13 from other Tubercular maladies in 1905; and 18 from Cancer and Malignant disease, against 31 in 1905.

There were 9 deaths from Zymotic disease; 2 from Diphtheria, 1 from Whooping Cough, and 6 from Summer or Epidemic Diarrhoea. The Zymotic death rate was therefore .49; while in 1905 it was .26. There were 2 deaths ascribed to Influenza. There was 1 death attributed to Alcoholism. There was therefore a decrease in the number of deaths from Pneumonia, Bronchitis, diseases of the Nervous System, Tubercle and Cancer; and an increase in the deaths from diseases of the Heart, and from Zymotic diseases.

There were 5 deaths registered from Accident or Violence during the year. In January a man aged 31, who was a "Motor Washer at the Royal Mews" died from "Fracture of the base of the skull," the result of a fall from a motor car. In May a man of 34 died at the Hospital from "Injuries received while at work with a chaff-cutter." In June a man 58 years of age died at the Hospital from "Compound Fracture of the skull accidentally received." In July an old woman of 72 died from "Fracture of the Tibia and Fibula, Gangrene, Amputation, Exhaustion." For some reason I cannot understand, in this case there was no Inquest. And in September an old man aged 68 was killed by accidentally "Colliding with a train on the Midland Railway."

There were 5 Inquests during the year: One in December on a woman of 65, who died from "Exhaustion consequent on insufficient food and general bad living," and the other four on the cases of death from Accident mentioned above.

There were two uncertified deaths: one in April of an old man of 73, who is stated to have died of "Heart Failure," and another in December of an infant 3 months old, who is said to have died of "General Debility."

On the whole our record for last year was very satisfactory, and compares favourably with 1905 and 1904. There was no really serious epidemic. Altogether, considering the unfavourable climatic conditions during the Summer, I think we have every reason to congratulate ourselves.

The death rates in the different divisions of the City were as follows :—

Abbey District	...	...	11.6 per thousand
St. Peter's District	...	...	9.5 „
St. Michael's District	...	...	12.4 „
Sandridge District	...	...	8.8 „

There were 362 births during the year, 171 of males and 191 of females. The birth rate was therefore 20.05, still lower than in 1905, when it was 20.8.

Of the births, 17 were illegitimate, and the proportion of illegitimate to legitimate births was therefore 46.9 per thousand, slightly more than in 1905, when it was 45.8. This is somewhat high, as the average proportion of illegitimate to legitimate births for the ten years preceding 1905 was 32.5.

There were 84 births in the Abbey District, 171 in St. Peter's, 81 in St. Michael's, 20 in Sandridge, and 6 in the Union Workhouse.

The birth rates in the different divisions of the City were as follows :—

Abbey District	...	...	18.4 per thousand
St. Peter's District	...	...	18.5 „
St. Michael's District	...	...	24.7 „
Sandridge District	...	...	19. „

The rate of mortality of children under 1 year of age per thousand registered births was 77. In 1905 it was 72.7. The average rate of mortality amongst infants for the preceding ten years was 101.2. Considering the very hot Summer we had last year, and the consequent increased liability of young children to Infantile Diarrhoea, I think this is very satisfactory.

Infectious Diseases.

During the year 1906, 82 cases of Infectious Diseases were notified : including 23 cases of Scarlet Fever (19 of which were treated in the Sisters' Hospital); 11 of Diphtheria; 2 of Enteric Fever; 11 of Erysipelas; 29 of Chicken Pox; and 6 of Tuberculosis of the Lungs. In 1905 there were 65 cases notified, including 18 cases of Scarlet Fever and 11 of Diphtheria.

Scarlet Fever.

A certain number of cases of Scarlet Fever occurred at different times in the year, but more especially in the Spring. The disease was generally of a mild type and at no time was there anything like an epidemic. There were 3 cases in January, 1 in February, 7 in March, 3 in April, 3 in May, 3 in June, 1 in July, and 2 in December. There were 12 cases in the Abbey District, 8 in St. Peter's, and 3 in St. Michael's. There were no deaths from this disease.

Diphtheria.

There were 11 cases of Diphtheria, which occurred at different times of the year, and in widely separated localities. In only one instance were there 2 cases in the same house, and with this exception, no 2 cases in the same street. There were 4 cases in the Abbey District, 6 in St. Peter's, and 1 in St. Michael's. There were 2 cases in January, 2 in February, 1 in March, 1 in May, 1 in July, 2 in August, and 2 in November. There were 2 deaths from this cause.

Enteric Fever.

There were 2 cases of Enteric Fever notified : 1 in September in the Hospital, and 1 in November in the Union Workhouse. They were both imported cases and both recovered.

Epidemic Diarrhœa.

Considering the exceedingly hot Summer last year, we had comparatively few deaths from this disease. There were 6 deaths in all recorded, including a case certified as Gastro-enteritis, which occurred in November. The other 5 cases, registered as due to Epidemic Enteritis, all occurred in September. There was 1 in the Abbey District, in Albert Street; 2 in St. Peter's, in Hatfield Road and Lattimore Road; and 3 in St. Michael's, in Thornton Street, in Cannon Street, and in Fishpool Street. It is worthy of special note that all these cases occurred in working-class neighbourhoods. The death rate from Diarrhœa was .33. I may mention that in some other parts of the County Epidemic Diarrhœa was much more prevalent than it was with us.

Deaths amongst infants from Summer Diarrhoea ought not to occur at all, as this disease can be entirely prevented by strict attention to cleanliness and sanitation. It is of the utmost importance that all milk consumed by young children should be boiled or sterilised, and that all feeding bottles, or utensils in which the milk is stored, should be kept most scrupulously clean. The micro-organism which causes infantile diarrhoea, not only requires hot weather for its development, but flourishes more especially in surroundings which are dirty and insanitary. Even if it does gain access to milk it is at once destroyed by boiling or sterilisation.

Measles and Whooping Cough.

There were a number of cases of Whooping Cough in the Spring and Summer, and there was 1 death from this cause in September, in St. Peter's district. There were practically no cases of Measles, although there was a serious epidemic of this disease in several of the neighbouring districts—such as Hitchin, Hemel Hempstead, and in some parts of St. Albans Rural District. The new regulations issued by the Herts County Council, requiring teachers in Public Elementary Schools to inform the Medical Officer of Health of any cases of Infectious Diseases (including Measles and Whooping Cough), which they may become aware of, amongst children attending their schools, will, I am convinced, be of much benefit, and is a step in the right direction.

Influenza.

There were a number of cases of Influenza in the early part of the year, and in November and December there was quite an epidemic of this disease. There were 2 deaths from this cause.

Cancer.

There were only 18 deaths from Cancer and Malignant Disease, as against 31 in 1905, and 23 in 1904. The death rate from Cancer was therefore .99, compared with 1.7 in 1905.

Tubercle.

There was a slight diminution in the number of deaths from Tubercle during the year. There were 22 deaths from Phthisis, and 7 from other Tubercular diseases; giving us a death rate for Phthisis of 1.2, and for Tubercle 1.6. In 1905 these numbers were 1.1 and 1.85 respectively. The average death rate for Tubercle during the last 10 years was 1.5, so that this year we are still slightly over the average. I must call attention to the fact that during the past year I have only received 6 Notifications of Phthisis, although as evidenced by the deaths the number of cases which occurred must have been much greater. And as the great

majority of the cases occur among the working classes, it is specially important, I consider, that they should be notified to your Medical Officer, who would then be in a position to visit them, and to impress upon the patients and their friends the necessity of using every possible precaution to prevent the disease from spreading. As Voluntary Notification appears to be a failure, I must ask you to make the Notification of Tubercle of the lungs compulsory, in fact to add it to the list of diseases notifiable under the Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act. I wish the public would realise that Pulmonary Consumption is an infectious disease, and that special means ought to be taken to prevent it from spreading. Not the least importance of these necessary precautions is the thorough disinfection of premises and bedding after the removal or death of a consumptive person.

The Sisters' Hospital.

There have been received during the past year into the Sisters' Hospital for Infectious Disease 55 patients, all admitted as suffering from Scarlet Fever. In addition to this there were 11 patients, who were admitted in 1905, remaining under treatment on January 1st, making in all 66 cases treated during the year. There were 19 cases from St. Albans City, 19 from St. Albans Rural District, and 17 from Harpenden Urban District. Of the admissions, 9 were of children between 1 and 5, 30 of children between 5 and 15, 11 of persons from 15 to 25, and 5 were over 25. There were two of the cases admitted into the Hospital, which did not turn out to be suffering from Scarlet Fever. These cases were isolated as well as possible, and discharged after a few days detention. This circumstance shows how desirable it is to have a special Isolation Block for the reception of doubtful cases. I trust that no long time will now elapse, before the erection of additional buildings for the accommodation of cases of Diphtheria and Enteric Fever. Hospital accommodation for Diphtheria, and for cases of Enteric occurring at any rate amongst the poor, is urgently required. I hope the necessary steps may be taken without further delay.

Small-Pox Hospital.

A still more urgent matter is the erection of a Small-Pox Hospital, on the site which was recently purchased by the Corporation at Redbourn for this purpose. It is, I believe, probable that after this year the Clare Hall Hospital will be no longer available for our Small-Pox cases. And that being so, common prudence demands that we should make provision for the future, so as not to be taken unprepared. We might get a case of Small-Pox at any moment, which, unless properly isolated, with so many unvaccinated persons among us, might start a most serious epidemic.

It is quite true that a Small-Pox Hospital would be unnecessary were every one efficiently vaccinated and re-vaccinated, but those of you at least who are Magistrates, and grant Exemption Certificates, know how far that is from being the case.

Water Supply.

During the past year we have had as usual a plentiful supply of pure and wholesome water. As our water comes from the Chalk, and is therefore exceedingly hard, it would be to the public benefit if the Water Company were to adopt some means of softening the water, and rendering it more suitable for domestic use. This is done with advantage in various other towns supplied with water from a similar source.

Drainage and Sewerage.

The drainage of the City is carried out in a thorough and efficient manner, and the sewage is dealt with at the Sewage Farm in a very satisfactory way. It is first taken into a Septic tank, then passed successively through coarse and fine Bacteria beds, and finally conducted over a considerable surface of land and filtered through the soil. The resulting effluent is then pure enough to be discharged into the river.

Ashes and Refuse.

A daily collection of ashes and refuse is now made in some of the central parts of the City, and in other localities the removal is once a week. I do not consider this quite often enough. A daily collection should be made in some of the poorest and most densely populated quarters, where there is very limited accommodation for storing refuse; and from all parts of the City the refuse should be collected at least twice a week. Proper carts with fixed covers should also be provided, in order to minimise the diffusion through the air of dust, which might contain infection.

As to the disposal of the refuse, there has of late been considerable difficulty in finding a suitable place for its deposition. I trust that it will not be long before a Dust Destructor is erected, as has been done in some neighbouring towns. This would also prove exceedingly useful for the destruction of trade refuse, offal, and other offensive matter.

Common Lodging Houses.

I have visited all the Common Lodging Houses throughout the City, whether on the register or not, and have found them fairly clean and well kept. As far as I could make out, they were not over-crowded. Some slight sanitary defects were noted, which will be put right.

Slaughter Houses.

I have visited the various Slaughter-houses within the City, and have to report that they are very fairly clean and well kept. I must, however, repeat once more, that I consider the existence of Slaughter houses in close proximity to dwelling-houses, can not fail to be a source of danger to the health of the community. I must once again recommend you seriously to consider the question of erecting a public Abattoir in some suitable locality, which would be under the direct supervision and control of your own Officers.

Bakehouses.

I have visited all the various Bakehouses within the City, and have found all in a satisfactory condition. There are 6 underground bakehouses in use, which have received certificates of suitability from the St. Albans Urban Sanitary Authority. A copy of the requirements of the Sanitary Authority was appended to my report for 1904.

Dairies, Milk Shops, and Cowsheds.

A register is kept of Dairies and Milk Shops, and they are inspected from time to time to see that they are in a properly Sanitary condition, and comply with the provisions of the Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milk shops Order of 1885, 1886, and 1899, and also with the Byelaws of the City.

The Cowsheds within the City have all been regularly inspected, and their condition as regards air-space, ventilation, cleanliness, drainage, etc., found satisfactory. The Veterinary Inspector frequently inspects the cows, and is specially careful to order the isolation of any cows which may be suffering from Tuberculosis of the udder, and to prohibit the sale of their milk.

In view of the Report of the Royal Commission on Tuberculosis published the other day, in which it is stated that Tubercle is undoubtedly capable of being communicated from the Cow to the human being through the medium of milk, I think it very advisable that the sale of the milk of cows which are Tuberculous, even though the udders are not affected, should be prohibited.

Factories and Workshops.

Under the Factories and Workshops Acts (1901), I have inspected all the Factories and Workshops within the City.

As regards the Factories (52 in number), which include Straw Hat Factories, Boot Factories, Laundries, Silk Mills, Printing Works, etc., I have to report that they are all fairly clean and well ventilated, with sufficient air-space allowed, and sufficient sanitary accommodation provided. The provisions for escape in the event of fire appear to be sufficient.

With respect to Workshops and Work-places, which number in all 137, I found them all, with one exception, very fairly clean, all sufficiently ventilated, and none over-crowded. In two cases sufficient and proper sanitary accommodation was not provided. These defects have been called attention to, and will be remedied.

All employers of out-workers are by law obliged to send lists of their out workers, giving their full names and addresses, twice a year in February and August, to the Medical Officer of Health or the Sanitary Inspector. I regret to report that during the past year this has not been done at all regularly, and that there has been great difficulty in obtaining these lists. I have to give notice that in future if these lists have not been sent in by the last day of the month in which they fall due, it will be my duty to take out a summons against the employer who is in default. I have received in all 26 lists of out-workers containing 539 names.

Byelaws and Regulations.

There are excellent Byelaws and Regulations in force in the City of St. Alban with respect to the Good rule and Government of the City, New Streets and Buildings, Nuisances, Common Lodging Houses, Dairies Cowsheds and Milkshops (dating June 1903), Clarence Park and Recreation Ground, etc.

“The Infectious Diseases (Prevention) Act” 1890, and “The Public Health (Amendment) Act” 1890, “Part III” have been adopted.

I have made systematic inspections of all the various parts of the City at different times throughout the year, but have found nothing, except what is mentioned above, that seems to call for special comment.

I beg to thank his Worship the Mayor and all the Members of the Council for their uniform courtesy and consideration.

My thanks are also due to the Town Clerk, the Inspector of Nuisances, the Surveyor, and all other Officials for their valuable assistance and co-operation.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient Servant,

JOHN MORISON, M.D., D.P.H.,

Medical Officer of Health.

February 12th, 1907.

